

COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Office of the Governor

Timothy M. Kaine
Governor

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
September 16, 2008

Contact: Gordon Hickey
Phone: (804) 225-4260
Cell Phone: (804) 291-8977
Internet: www.governor.virginia.gov

Melissa Perdue, VDSS
(804) 726-7111
www.dss.state.va.us

GOVERNOR KAINE DECLARES SEPTEMBER AS KINSHIP CAREGIVERS MONTH

*~ By caring for relatives, kinship families help keep children out of foster care
system ~*

RICHMOND – Governor Timothy M. Kaine today announced that September has been designated Kinship Caregivers Month. Kinship caregivers are grandparents, aunts, uncles and siblings who care for younger relatives when their parents can not.

“Many family members honorably and lovingly step in to raise the children of relatives in difficult circumstances,” Governor Kaine said. “Through their care, so many children are able to live with a sense of security and family.”

Virginia has set a priority of decreasing the number of children in the foster care system by moving them into permanent family situations. Kinship caregivers play an important role in achieving that goal.

“Research indicates that children who are placed with families fare better than those in residential care facilities,” said Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS) Commissioner Anthony Conyers Jr. “Virginia is increasing efforts to locate kin and provide them with resources and coaching to make the transition smoother.”

VDSS and many of its partner agencies offer support and resources for kinship caregivers including:

- Financial assistance for a child through Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Last year, legislation was passed to waive the normal waiting period for TANF for children who are placed with relatives due to abuse or neglect.
- Training classes through 120 local departments of social services. These courses are especially helpful for family members caring for a child for the first time or those caring for an older child.

This month, [FACES of Virginia Families](http://www.facesofvirginiafamilies.org), a statewide foster, adoption and kinship association, launches a new toll-free number for kinship families. “Our hope is that kinship

families will call and identify themselves so that we can reach out to them with resources and support. They can also use this number when they need information or need to know where to go for help,” said FACES Kinship Care Vice President Sarah Smalls. The number is 877-VA-FACES (877-823-2237).

Kinship care is among a number of strategies being deployed by the Commonwealth to strengthen family connections. Read about the [Children’s Services System Transformation](#) at www.vafamilyconnections.com

#